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# Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

*Provisional*

**4470**th meeting

Thursday, 7 February 2002, 10.30 a.m.

New York

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| *President:* | Mr. Aguilar Zinser | (Mexico) |
| *Members:* | Bulgaria | Mr. Tafrov |
| | Cameroon | Mr. Mbayu |
| | China | Mr. Chen Xu |
| | Colombia | Mr. Franco |
| | France | Mr. Doutriaux |
| | Guinea | Mr. Fall |
| | Ireland | Mr. Corr |
| | Mauritius | Mr. Gokool |
| | Norway | Mr. Strømmen |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Gatilov |
| | Singapore | Ms. Lee |
| | Syrian Arab Republic | Mr. Mekdad |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Harrison |
| | United States of America | Mr. Siv |

## Agenda

Briefing by Mr. Ruud Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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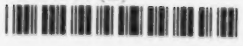

*The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Briefing by Mr. Ruud Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ruud Lubbers, High Commissioner for Refugees.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Lubbers to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ruud Lubbers, High Commissioner for Refugees. After the briefing, I shall give the floor to Council members who wish to comment or ask questions.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lubbers.

**Mr. Lubbers**: Mr. President, thank you for inviting me to brief the Security Council.

Let me begin with 11 September. Resolution 1373 (2001) calls on States to work together to prevent and suppress terrorist acts and to prevent terrorists from gaining admission to countries by illegally abusing the asylum system. This is entirely consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention, which specifically excludes persons who have committed serious crimes.

Therefore, perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of terrorist crimes who might seek to abuse the asylum channel have to be promptly identified and dealt with. At the same time, let me add words of caution. In taking measures, we must ensure that Governments avoid making unwarranted linkages between refugees and terrorism. Genuine refugees are themselves the victims of persecution and terrorism, not its perpetrators. Innocent people should not be deprived of their basic rights.

Refugees and asylum seekers have for some years been the object of considerable mistrust and hostility in many countries, and they are now particularly vulnerable. In the current climate, there is a risk that refugees and asylum seekers may become convenient scapegoats and may be unfairly victimized. We must not allow this to happen. We must continue to fight against xenophobia and intolerance in our societies.

We must not allow the global fight against terrorism to weaken the international refugee protection regime. Refugees and asylum seekers must not be discriminated against; one must not assume too easily that their religion, ethnicity, national origin or political affiliation somehow link them to terrorism. Governments must avoid resorting to the mandatory or arbitrary detention of asylum seekers and to procedures that do not comply with the standards of due process. Detention of asylum seekers must remain the exception, not the rule. Resettlement programmes and solutions must be maintained and must not discriminate against people of particular ethnic groups or nationalities.

In November last year my Office issued a document outlining these concerns and providing practical suggestions on how to ensure that applicable international standards relating to refugee protection are met. Since then, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been called upon by Governments to provide its expertise in helping to draft new regulations aimed at avoiding abuse of the asylum channel by terrorists and other criminals. UNHCR stands ready to continue cooperating with States in this respect, to ensure that standards of refugee protection are respected.

There are currently more than 21 million refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless people and others of concern to my Office. I am determined in particular to make progress in finding durable solutions for those people. In many countries, it can be done. The first challenge is to ensure that the international community remains fully committed to supporting political processes aimed at ending conflict.

Let me turn to the Afghan situation. As the Council is aware, even before 11 September, Afghans constituted the largest refugee population in the world, with some 3.5 million in Pakistan and Iran alone, and

many others spread out in countries across the world. In the last few months, in spite of the insistence of Pakistan, Iran and other neighbouring countries on keeping their borders with Afghanistan officially closed, UNHCR encouraged them to provide temporary protection for the most vulnerable.

Some 300,000 Afghans have entered those two countries since 11 September. We have succeeded in ensuring that their basic needs are met. Beyond this, in Pakistan, considerable progress has been made in transferring refugees from makeshift camps to more secure areas with better living conditions. It is particularly gratifying to note that the notorious Jalozai camp, where conditions have been particularly bad, is about to close. This is indeed an incredible improvement if one compares the situation to the one that prevailed only a year ago.

Inside Afghanistan, the number of internally displaced people was estimated to be around 1 million in December, bringing the total number of displaced Afghans to around 5 million — one fifth of the population. Now, with the new Interim Administration in place under Chairman Karzai, and with international troops on the ground, we will address the massive problem of human displacement.

My Office is fully committed to playing an active role, within the United Nations operation and under the leadership of Lakhdar Brahimi, to help build peace in the country, enabling refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes. The UNHCR initial return plan describes our regional approach to the Afghan situation, outlining the preparations that we are making for the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons.

It is difficult to estimate at this stage the magnitude of the return movement and the speed at which it will take place, but our initial plan is to assist up to 1.2 million returnees in 2002: 400,000 from Pakistan, 400,000 from Iran and approximately 400,000 internally displaced persons — all going home. This is a substantial return operation. In fact, for the Afghans I will now be the "High Commissioner for Returnees", and that is a gratifying experience.

Security, as the Council is aware, is now the most important condition for significant returns. The majority of the 5 million refugees are from countryside. It is therefore vital to have adequate security throughout the country, not only in Kabul and the main urban centres. I am therefore concerned about the deteriorating security situation in various parts of Afghanistan. The recent violence in Paktia province has been widely reported. In Balkh province tension between rival factions has resulted in serious clashes in at least two areas, with atrocities against civilians — including killings and rape — reported in Sholgara. In Mazar-e-Sharif, in spite of General Dostum's disarmament campaign, armed men from rival factions have flowed back into the city in the past few weeks, and they are visible in the streets right now.

The issue of security is crucial. Events such as those in Paktia and Balkh provinces, and ethnic tension in general in the north of the country, including Baghlan province, are a deterrent to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. At the same time, they also prevent our access for humanitarian operations. If the security situation continues to deteriorate, Afghanistan will slide back into a 1992-like situation. I therefore strongly support the position taken here by Lakhdar Brahimi yesterday to extend the mandate of the international security assistance force beyond Kabul.

Since the end of November, in Pakistan over 100,000 Afghan refugees are estimated to have already been repatriated. While that repatriation continues, the influx from Afghanistan into Pakistan has not come to a halt. We are talking about thousands fleeing from Afghanistan daily. While the lack of sufficient assistance is being cited as the main reason for persons continuing to flee Afghanistan, recent arrivals — particularly from the north — have increasingly referred to discrimination against Pashtuns. This is a worrying development. I hereby make a strong plea for tolerance, non-discrimination and reconciliation in the new Afghanistan.

In Iran over 65,000 refugees are estimated to have been repatriated voluntarily since the end of November, and spontaneous returns are continuing at the rate of about 700 per day. But, in addition, the Government has been deporting substantial numbers of Afghans. UNHCR continues to request access to those deportees to establish whether or not there are any refugees among them.

Although the international spotlight has been on Afghanistan, Africa continues to demand the greatest share of UNHCR's resources and attention. Out of 21 million people of concern to my Office, more than 5

million are in Africa. A considerable number of them have been languishing for years in refugee camps.

In December of last year, UNHCR organized a ministerial-level meeting in Geneva to discuss these problems in Africa. It was made clear at that meeting that opportunities are arising to put an end to some of Africa's protracted refugee situations. Those opportunities must be seized.

Turning now to Sierra Leone, a year ago, following my first visit to the country, I briefed the Security Council on humanitarian issues there. Since then there has been much progress, and repatriation of Sierra Leonean refugees has now begun in earnest. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone's successful completion of the disarmament process has greatly contributed to stability in the country. UNHCR did its part, and the Government's declaration that the war has officially ended is also a welcome development. Now that the war is over, it is vital to build the peace. My Office is actively engaged in facilitating the return of refugees from Guinea, and we will soon start facilitating similar returns from other countries of asylum, particularly Liberia, the Gambia and Ghana. The return of refugees is essential for successful and legitimate elections. Meanwhile, the deteriorating situation in Liberia is of great concern. New Liberian refugees are already arriving in Sierra Leone, and it is vital that every effort be made to contain the situation in Liberia.

Eritrea is another example of where considerable numbers of refugees are returning after many years of exile. The United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea plays a vital role there. Over the last year, some 36,000 refugees have been repatriated voluntarily from the Sudan, and recently the momentum has picked up even more. While most of those persons are refugees who fled Eritrea during the conflict with Ethiopia in 2000, some of them are refugees who had been living in camps since the 1960s and 1970s. We intend to complete the repatriation exercise by 2003. However, we will then have to work on Eritrea's absorption capacity, where there are some concerns.

Another successful repatriation operation is that involving 50,000 refugees returning from Ethiopia to north-west and north-east Somalia. Those numbers may be modest in comparison with the total numbers of refugees in Africa — we are talking about all the examples now — but they are significant in emphasizing the need to find solutions to very protracted refugee situations. The challenge of course is to make sure that those returns are sustainable. I must therefore encourage development actors to invest in areas of return so that returnees can rebuild their lives and engage in productive activities.

As the Council knows, there are some hopeful signs in the Great Lakes region. The situation in Burundi was reviewed by the Security Council earlier this week, with the personal participation of President Buyoya. Nelson Mandela's previous efforts and the efforts currently being made by Deputy President Zuma of South Africa and President Omar Bongo of Gabon to broker a ceasefire between the parties to the conflict are positive developments. In the event of an effective ceasefire, I anticipate that hundreds of thousands of refugees in Tanzania and elsewhere will voluntarily return. Currently, some 600,000 Burundians are living as refugees in East, Central and southern Africa, while a further 600,000 remain internally displaced in Burundi. This is a massive operation. Last year saw a modest beginning, with 30,000 refugees going back to the northern provinces of Burundi. That is an indication that refugees are ready and willing to return as soon as it is safe to do so.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) last year was a positive step forward. Another concrete, positive element was the separation of 1,400 ex-combatants who fled from the Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of the Congo together with some 24,000 refugees. But, in general, lack of access remains one of the main challenges facing UNHCR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I therefore hope that the further deployment of MONUC in the country will lead to improved access. Beyond that, of course, we are looking forward to the too-long delayed inter-Congolese dialogue finally beginning on 25 February. Should that political process be successful, a withdrawal of all foreign forces from the eastern part of the country may lead to a large-scale return of refugees from Tanzania and Zambia. So there are prospects but it is still very difficult.

Africa must remain a top priority. The international community cannot afford to neglect its chronic problems of poverty, conflict and instability.

Neither can it afford to ignore the refugees that these conflicts have generated.

Let me give one example. Western Sahara is an example of a protracted refugee situation where there are few immediate prospects for durable solutions and where humanitarian assistance and protection for the refugees remains under-funded. It is unacceptable that in a long-term protracted situation our activities should be under-funded.

Africa's leaders have committed themselves to putting the continent back on the path to peace, political stability, economic prosperity and sustainable development. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) deserves full support. Currently, the NEPAD initiative contains no specific provisions for refugees and returnees. Therefore, my Office is working closely with the African Union to ensure that this issue is adequately addressed within the NEPAD framework. I am pleased to note that G-8 countries are supportive of NEPAD, and I hope that their interest will be reflected also at the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held at Monterrey in March. The integration of refugees and returnees into the African economy and into the reconstruction process is key. It should also be of interest to the Security Council: without such integration, refugee populations will be a breeding ground for new problems.

In the Balkans, we are often quick to describe the problems. But we should not forget that there have also been some important success stories. Democratic Governments have replaced authoritarian regimes in Croatia and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and more than 2 million people who were forced to flee their homes during the wars of the last decade have returned to their homes. Still, many challenges lie ahead.

Serbia continues to host 230,000 ethnic Serbs and members of other minorities who fled Kosovo, as well as 390,000 refugees from earlier conflicts. All together, that constitutes the largest single refugee community in Europe. In spite of all our efforts to facilitate returns, many of those people are likely to have to stay. The Government has recognized the problem and is working on a strategy for the needed local integration, which of course will succeed only if jobs are created and public housing is provided. It is good that this is understood. Thus, we are working on two tracks: integration for those who cannot return; and very active action to promote returns where possible. In southern Serbia, UNHCR has played an active role in preventing new violence. I refer in particular to the mixed police force.

In Kosovo itself there has been some limited progress. In September 2001, we facilitated the first return of Serbs to Kosovo after more than two years of displacement. The number is still very small, but the significance is greater. It sent a political signal that was important for the peaceful conclusion of the elections last year. However, the problem is not with the election; the problem is in the countryside, where local Government structures still have not sufficiently changed their attitude. Therefore, there is still instability. The continued displacement and isolation of hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Roma and members of other minority groups remains a real concern. Local leaders are still failing to make it possible at present for members of minorities to lead a normal life in the province.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, my Office continues to work alongside European monitors and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in conflict-affected areas to help build confidence between communities. More than 80 per cent of the 170,000 people who were displaced last year have now returned to their homes. But unless progress is made in implementing the Framework Agreement of 13 August 2001, there will be a serious risk of further unrest and population displacement. The Government's recent adoption of the law on self-government is an encouraging step in the right direction, but it needs to be implemented as soon as possible.

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, more refugees and internally displaced persons have been able to go home to areas controlled by opposing ethnic factions over the past year. We are talking about 100,000 in 2001. That is the highest number to date. Still, significant problems remain. We are speaking about 800,000 people from these countries who have not been able to return to their former homes and who have not yet found a durable solution. Property repossession is the single most important issue affecting the return of refugees and internally displaced persons in both Bosnia and Croatia. UNHCR is focusing its efforts on ensuring that local authorities implement property laws and assist with the reconstruction of properties destroyed by the war.

We thus see that throughout the Balkan region the needs are shifting from emergency relief to development. But just at the time when international financial support is most needed, the amount of money available appears to be diminishing. It is crucial that we do not allow donor fatigue to jeopardize the significant progress which has been made in the Balkans towards resolving the problem of displacement. Many refugees and internally displaced persons find themselves returning to rural areas, where they face considerable difficulties in their economic and social reintegration. Unemployment continues to affect a high proportion of returnees, making job creation an urgent priority. International financial support continues to be sorely needed in this process.

Let me move further east from South-East Europe and say a few words about Georgia. I greatly welcome the Security Council's recent call on the parties to the conflict to reduce the level of tension on both sides of the ceasefire line, building on the protocol presented by Mr. Dieter Boden, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Georgia. Without a commitment by the parties to ensure the security of the civilian population, progress in meeting humanitarian needs will remain very limited.

We are approaching 20 May 2002, independence day for East Timor. I am pleased to say that almost 194,000 East Timorese refugees have successfully been repatriated from West Timor. The challenge now is to find durable solutions for the remaining 70,000 East Timorese refugees. There are indications that the militias in West Timor no longer have such a firm grip on the camp populations, but there are still a number of factors inhibiting returns. There is the issue of Indonesian Government pension payments, and there is the problem of the lack of adequate housing in East Timor. These very practical problems have to be solved to ensure that the remaining 70,000, or at least most of them, can return home. These problems have to be addressed urgently, because it is my intention to complete voluntary repatriation before independence day. UNHCR is not in a position to stay there month after month, year after year. Here, independence means that people can go home.

Let me mention another signal of hope in another part of the globe: in Mexico. In Mexico, the Government has in the last few years naturalized more than 6,000 Guatemalan refugees who chose not to repatriate, providing a successful example of local integration. The state government of Quintana Roo has also recently donated a substantial amount of land for these former refugees, demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the sustainability of this local integration.

It would be gratifying to cover the whole world, but I must come to a close. At the end of 2000, my Office launched the Global Consultations on International Protection in order to reflect on how to revitalize the international framework for refugee protection set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, and to assist States to address the current humanitarian challenges. One thing which became clear was that there is still an enormous commitment to protect refugees but that there is also a need for more practical burden-sharing.

The unique consultative process — the Global Consultations — have brought together representatives of States from all regions of the world, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and so forth, as well as refugees themselves. This process will generate an agenda for protection, which will serve as a guide for years to come.

As part of this process, on 12 and 13 December last year a Ministerial Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention took place in Geneva. It was a rather special event — the first such gathering of States parties in 50 years. It was opened by the President of the General Assembly and attended by 162 States, including 76 represented at ministerial level. The gathering adopted a landmark declaration of States parties, which breaks new ground in a number of areas. It specifically emphasizes the need to ensure respect for the rights and freedoms of refugees, for international cooperation to resolve their plight and for action to address the causes of refugee movements and to prevent them from becoming a source of tension between States.

Let me conclude by making it very clear, in relation to the Council's responsibilities, that refugees are the consequences of conflict and persecution and of a lack of security. But that is not the whole story. As a consequence of the deficiencies in our political systems, we need durable solutions for these refugees — repatriation, local integration or resettlement. If these solutions are not provided, refugee camps and populations will become breeding grounds for despair, and refugees in despair go on the

move. In fact, they fuel human trafficking and criminal networks. Youngsters will be tempted to become, once again, partners of agents of violence. The Security Council, therefore, must also be aware of that.

It is not only a question of prevention in relation to refugees; we must also find durable solutions and call on nations to assist in that endeavour. In fact, if solutions are not provided, we are talking about a ticking time bomb. When we provide solutions, they act as some of the most effective instruments to push back and put a halt to these crimes, which are on the rise. Solutions are among the most important instruments to prevent new violence. They are, indeed, a key factor in achieving the goal of security.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lubbers for the realistic perspective and the information that he has provided to the Council. I would like to congratulate him and his staff on the dedicated humanitarian work that they have been doing to benefit the 21 million refugees throughout the world.

I will now call on Council members for their comments or questions relating to Mr. Lubbers' statement. In order to make this meeting more interactive, I will call on several Council members before reverting to Mr. Lubbers for his response.

**Mr. Siv** (United States): Let me first thank the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Lubbers, for a very informative briefing. We believe that it is important for the Council to keep abreast of refugee and humanitarian issues, which have a significant bearing on international peace and security in many parts of the world. We appreciate the fact that the High Commissioner has shared his views with us. Let me assure him of my Government's support for refugee assistance and for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As we enter the second half-century of the existence of both the UNHCR and the Refugee Convention, it is important that we in the international community reaffirm our commitment to the protection and care of refugees and that we provide to UNHCR the support that it needs.

For its part, the United States is a committed partner. Regrettably, UNCHR remains constantly underfunded and has been obliged to move to a resource-based budget. It is not acceptable to us that some refugees, particularly in Africa, are not receiving acceptable standards of care. It is not only UNHCR that is short-funded; the World Food Programme is beset by problems stemming from inadequate donor support and breaks in the food pipeline. Refugees in some areas go for unacceptable periods of time without food supplies. The United States will continue to provide its fair share of funding.

We were interested to hear the High Commissioner's views on the impact of 11 September and counter-terrorism measures. While the United States has undertaken new measures to protect our national security, we cannot and will not permit the tragic events of 11 September to compromise our long-standing tradition of providing refuge to those in need. We must make sure, however, that terrorists are not allowed to take advantage of the refugee protection system. In our view, this can be prevented through the scrupulous application of the exceptions to refugee protection available under current law. We stand ready to work with UNHCR to ensure that refugee status, determination procedures and registration methods take into account the new security measures to combat terrorism.

In this vein, we again highlight the fact that the security of refugee camps remains a key issue. We need to ensure that refugees are protected from attacks, from hostage-taking, from recruitment and from sexual and gender-based violence. We also remain concerned about the security of humanitarian workers, but we welcome the steps taken to enhance coordination between United Nations agencies and the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator.

Today it is our hope that in Afghanistan, the millions of refugees who fled so many years ago will eventually be able to return voluntarily, in safety and dignity, when security conditions permit. It is important that, as part of the reconstruction effort, we focus on preparing for return. We look forward to learning more about UNHCR's assessments of return areas and preparations to ensure that assistance will be timely and adequate.

We are pleased that in Western Sahara, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has funded two UNHCR international positions for the operation there. We also strongly support UNHCR's plans to build confidence between the two sides.

We are still keenly concerned about the range of refugee situations in Africa. We welcome the prospects for voluntary return in safety and dignity but caution

against premature and, therefore, destabilizing repatriation. We are pleased with the progress towards peace in Sierra Leone. We continue to support efforts to facilitate the return of refugees, and we have expressed a firm desire to see all of them repatriated. We recognize that for many, the time is not yet right. We are also concerned about the ongoing instability in northern Liberia, where tens of thousands of Liberians and several thousand Sierra Leonean refugees have been uprooted.

We encourage the High Commissioner's interest in looking at ways to address protracted refugee situations, to make the most of refugees' resources and contributions and to view them as assets rather than liabilities. We urge refugee-hosting countries to include refugees in their poverty reduction and development plans.

As a former refugee, I would like to express my particular appreciation to those countries that have provided refuge to the millions forced to flee, not only in South Asia but also in Africa, Asia and South-Eastern Europe. Their generous hospitality and their contribution to the international effort are not adequately recognized.

**Mr. Franco** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank Mr. Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for the excellent presentation he has provided us with today. I should also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Lubbers and the Government of Switzerland on the success of the first meeting of the Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1961 Protocol, which was held in December in Geneva.

As this is a meeting that gives us an opportunity to ask questions and make comments, I should like to offer a few brief comments of my own and then address a couple of questions to Mr. Lubbers.

First, I believe that we have received a very clear message from Mr. Lubbers that the fight against international terrorism cannot and must not be incompatible with the right to seek refuge. In this respect, the Security Council faces an enormous challenge.

Secondly, it is essential that solidarity concerning this issue, which has existed since 1951, be kept intact. This solidarity requires political support, resistance against the fear that may be generated by terrorist acts, resources in an environment of increasing scarcity, and fulfilment of simple commitments such as subscribing unreservedly to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, in cases in which this has not yet been done. This solidarity permeates the entire agenda of the Security Council and is not confined to a few issues, notwithstanding the focus of attention of the international media.

Thirdly, in all cases security is essential, and Mr. Lubbers has referred very explicitly to this fact. We understand that it is fundamental that secure conditions exist, not only for the return of refugees but also for all humanitarian responses, both in countries of origin and in countries of destination. However, the issue of security conditions does not apply only to Afghanistan. We must also bring this perspective prominently to all our discussions, particularly those related to Africa, where the needs are great but there is often far less practical interest on the part of the international community and fewer possibilities of generating a solid international response backed by resources.

My final comment involves the individual and collective commitment of every member of the Council to the political resolution of all conflicts. That is the best way to achieve the return of refugees and internally displaced persons — there is no substitute for it — and to produce the best results in the long run.

On the basis of these comments, I would like to ask Mr. Lubbers three questions.

The first concerns security in the refugee camps, to which he has referred. In Africa in particular, there are attacks on refugees, and a dynamic prevails in which refugees are mixed in with rebels or even with potential terrorists. I would like Mr. Lubbers to make some practical recommendations, in the light of the experience of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to help us draw a distinction on the ground and also to implement mechanisms of cooperation with local authorities to carry out practical measures that would enable us to distinguish a refugee from a rebel or terrorist.

My second question concerns the emphasis placed by the international community on the refugees' countries of origin or on the receiving countries. Our perception is that we tend to focus on the countries of origin — Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone — based somewhat on the fact

that those are the places of crisis. We tend not to focus much on the countries of destination — Guinea, Iran, Pakistan, Tanzania, Zambia. Recognizing that resources are scarce and that there is a proliferation of international causes that compete for those resources, what would be your practical recommendation, Mr. Lubbers, as to the approach we should take? Should we focus more on needs in the countries of origin or on those in the receiving countries? Naturally, one might claim that it would be better to do both, as a whole, and that sounds very good from a political perspective. In practice, however, it may not always be feasible.

My final question is this. In order to give us a clearer picture, might Mr. Lubbers perhaps educate us on the figures involved? How much does he estimate it to cost to return, rehabilitate and reintegrate a single refugee? The Council has at times been given certain figures, for instance, for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, but I do not have a very clear idea of the average cost of returning a refugee. I should like to know, more or less, whether there is a difference, for example, in such costs in Afghanistan as compared to Africa. It might also help the Council to respond if it were given some specific figures.

**Mr. Doutriaux** (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the High Commissioner for Refugees for his briefing.

With respect to his opening remarks on the fight against terrorism, which he said must in no way compromise international protection of the right to asylum, I have nothing to add. I believe that we agree with them word for word. The international community must actively combat terrorism, in accordance with resolution 1373 (2001), but quite obviously that must in no way mitigate international protection of the rights of refugees.

Mr. Lubbers went on to refer to the situation in Afghanistan and in other parts of the world. Concerning the situation in Afghanistan, Mr. Lubbers was right to emphasize the prerequisites for the return of the many refugees now in Iran and Pakistan, one of which is clearly that of safety. There is another requirement, however, on which I know the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is working assiduously: the conditions for return. Before they can return to Afghanistan, refugees must have a home, a job and a normal environment to return to, enabling them to live normally in their own country. I also know that UNHCR is negotiating tripartite agreements with Afghanistan and the host countries Iran and Pakistan precisely in order to plan the return of refugees in due course so that they can enjoy normal conditions in their country of origin.

I entirely agree with Mr. Lubbers' statement that we must, of course, pay close attention to the Afghan crisis, but there are many other crises, unfortunately, involving a great many refugees that we must not lose sight of. We must not fall victim to what is often called the "CNN effect". Unfortunately, there are other crises and, as Mr. Lubbers said, many other refugees, for example, in Africa.

What is of interest to us in the Security Council is to ensure that, when we adopt a peacekeeping mandate — as in the cases of Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of the Congo — we are able to take fully into account, to the extent allowed by available resources, the situation of refugees and displaced persons. Mr. Lubbers referred, for instance, to the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone. That mandate provides for the assistance of the Blue Helmets, to the extent possible in their area of deployment, in the return of refugees and displaced persons. I believe that, when the Security Council adopts resolutions providing Blue Helmets to a peacekeeping operation, we must take systematically into account the problem of displaced persons and refugees.

As Mr. Lubbers pointed out, the very fact that we deploy observers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo creates an environment favourable to the return of displaced persons and refugees. Security Council action, however, is unfortunately not sufficient in itself to solve the problems of displaced persons and refugees. Assistance is needed. The UNHCR is providing it and donors should provide more of it, including in association with UNHCR. I would draw the Council's attention to a programme that France has established with UNHCR for the return to Sierra Leone of refugees now living in Guinea. We provide bilateral assistance and contribute to bilateral and multilateral assistance through UNHCR for the reintegration of Sierra Leonean refugees.

I have a question for Mr. Lubbers. Every year, the Economic and Social Council convenes a humanitarian

segment. I believe that it will be held this year in July in New York. Member States are currently considering the themes to be included on the agenda of the humanitarian segment this year. Can Mr. Lubbers give us his personal point of view, which might help delegations in their thinking? One theme, clearly, is the issue of access to vulnerable populations, but perhaps Mr. Lubbers might be more specific about what the Economic and Social Council can do at its humanitarian segment this July.

**Mr. Fall** (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes in its turn to thank Mr. Lubbers for his very detailed and useful briefing. My delegation welcomes his presentation and thanks Mr. Lubbers for the regularity with which he remains in touch with our Council and of his briefings since his assumption of the leadership of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He has done well, given that issues involving refugees arise in all phases of a crisis, including in the settlement of conflicts and even in post-conflict periods.

It is encouraging to note his ongoing interest in the fate of the many refugees in Africa. Regardless of the current increased focus on Afghanistan, as the representative of France pointed out earlier, we still feel that Africa remains a special case that must continue to enjoy focused attention. We can see that Mr. Lubbers is providing that attention and encourage him to continue to do so.

While there may be real hope today for Sierra Leone, we must nevertheless continue to stress the problems of Sierra Leonean refugees, notably the resumption of their repatriation with a view to enabling them to participate in the elections scheduled for May and thus to ensuring the broadest possible participation of the Sierra Leonean people in those consultations, which are of great importance to this Council. In that connection, I wonder what specific measures Mr. Lubbers is considering to encourage the remaining Sierra Leoneans living as refugees, inter alia, in Guinea to go home. What measures have been taken for their repatriation and reintegration within Sierra Leone?

I should like to stress that Guinea, a country that hosts refugees, welcomes Mr. Lubbers' initiative of Global Consultations on an agenda for protecting refugees. In our opinion, that initiative is now necessary in order to revitalize international legal instruments aimed at protecting refugees, notably the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the better to adjust them to the current international environment and thus to ensure protection for refugees and, as Mr. Lubbers quite rightly stressed, that refugees do not become a source of tension between States, particularly those of origin and those that receive them.

The 1951 Convention essentially rests on shared responsibilities. Regrettably, the host countries continue to bear the heaviest burden, a fact which continues to be a source of concern. Ambassador Franco addressed this issue at some length earlier, and we fully share his views in that respect.

Likewise, the situation of displaced persons remains a continuing source of concern. Every possible measure should be taken by the international community to restore and consolidate peace and security in countries that have just emerged from conflict and to adopt effective additional measures likely to promote national reconciliation and development.

Allow me to thank Mr. Lubbers once again. I wish to pay tribute to the humanitarian staff he heads for the dedicated and courageous work they are doing under what are often very dangerous and trying circumstances.

**Mr. Harrison** (United Kingdom): Mr. President, may I, through you, join others in thanking Mr. Lubbers for his excellent and comprehensive briefing. It is very useful for the Security Council to be given such a good overview of his work in the areas in which we are engaged.

I should like just to ask two questions, through you, Mr. President, to Mr. Lubbers. The first concerns Afghanistan, and the second is a more generic question.

In Mr. Lubbers' presentation, he drew attention to the proposal by Mr. Brahimi that the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) should be extended more generally throughout Afghanistan. I should like to ask him if he could give us some indication of how that might, in his opinion, influence refugee flows within and from Afghanistan, and in particular how much the insecurity that currently prevails in the rural areas of Afghanistan represents a constraint on the return of refugees. That is my first question.

My second, more generic question relates to the recent restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which other speakers have referred to. I would like to ask Mr. Lubbers how great an effect that has had on his responses to recent crises, including the one in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Lubbers**: I wish to express my gratitude in general for the positive reactions. I will try to respond to some of the questions put forward.

I will respond to the last question first — a general one. Yes, it is true that, when I took office, I had to face the consequences of the fact that the budget, as decided by my governing body — the Executive Committee — was substantially higher than the funding. Therefore we had to face a gap of $125 million, or 13 per cent of the budget. I saw no other way to close that gap than to reduce the organization. That was a painful operation, both in terms of our advocacy role in countries and of the assistance aspect. We were a bit concerned that we really went to what one might call the rock bottom, the absolute minimum. That is where we are.

This means also that each additional challenge has to be met by additional funding. Here, Afghanistan is a prime example. Let me give the Council an impression of the numbers. The budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for 2002 — its annual budget — is $828 million. The Afghanistan operation costs about $18 million a month. If we deduct some $5 million, which was already part of the annual budget in the whole region, we are speaking of about $13 million a month, which is about $170 million — roughly 20 percent over our funded budget. From that, it becomes clear, of course, that we can carry out the Afghanistan operation only with additional funding from countries. As the Council is aware, generous pledges were made earlier in a broad forum event in Geneva, and more recently, in a broader context, in Tokyo.

As for the budgetary consequences, let me turn to one of the questions posed by the representative of Colombia — the third question. It is not easy to define and calculate the cost of repatriation. That is related to the question: what is the role of UNHCR in that respect, and at what point do we hand over to other agencies and development actors?

Let us take the example of Afghanistan, which is an interesting example — it is not Africa, it is not Europe, it is a specific situation. Let me now relate this budget of $271 million for 15 months — $18 million a month — to the one and a quarter million whom we bring back in a year. That is all on paper, of course. We have to see what the exact numbers will be. But at least this gives the Council an indication of the shortage of money in terms of what is needed for the specific role of UNHCR.

Let me explain once again the specific role of UNHCR. Council members all can relate to Governments; maybe the easiest example is to say that refugees and internally displaced persons are people who do not have a government that takes care of them. But they have UNHCR. It functions, in effect, as a Minister for the Interior. It registers people, knows where they are, makes profiles of them and asks where they can go back to. This is our type of work.

Because there is no government taking care of these issues, when needed, we also provide protection and assistance, together with other bodies such as the World Food Programme. We are a coordinating force with other departments — other ministers — for those people without a government.

When we bring them back, in the beginning we go with them. We try to assist them with their initial needs — travelling and settling in. Sometimes we go somewhat further. Take the example of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, where we helped people go back to their villages and assisted them in repairing their houses, in order to ensure their successful return. If they are farmers, we can go as far as providing the first seeds.

Of course, we try to do this in partnership with others and to hand things over, as soon as possible, to development agencies, through the interface of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction and rehabilitation. It is very difficult, therefore, to define a precise budget in terms of this type of durable solution.

There are, of course, other solutions. In the context of repatriation, there is also local integration in the first countries of asylum.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). I spoke with President Mbeki and with Prime Minister Chrétien, whose country is a

member of the G-8, about the need to use this important new initiative also in connection with refugees in terms of return and local integration. In response to another question, we see that refugees are often a burden to the local population in host countries. We do hope that, as part of this new plan for Africa, new ways and means will be found to address needs in those regions where there are large refugee populations, not only to meet the needs of refugees but also to meet the needs of the local population so that there is less antagonism in the host countries and so that the populations of the host countries can see that, although they may have a lot of refugees, they are not only a burden but also represent prospects for development activities — for building roads, establishing hospitals and so forth. Such a change in paradigm — that is, that there is not only humanitarian assistance for refugees but also assistance for affected and burdened regions and host countries — is a very important change indeed towards striking the balance called for by the representative of Colombia. The representative of the United States also made comments about that challenge.

Let me now turn to the intriguing question of the French Ambassador, about setting the agenda for the humanitarian segment in the meetings of the Economic and Social Council. I think that this indeed presents an opportunity. As the Council is aware, the Economic and Social Council's work by definition complements the work of the Security Council, while at the same time being totally different from it. From the outset, there has been a Security Council and an Economic and Social Council. But I hope that I made it clear in my intervention this morning that they are not totally separate, especially when it comes to finding durable solutions. In that instance, organizations related to the Economic and Social Council are very important, as are the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council. To the extent that they are successful — in that connection I also mentioned the upcoming Monterrey Conference — they are an investment in security for the future.

To put it another way, if those investments in durable solutions are not made, we will again see desperate refugees turning to criminal networks and undergoing all sorts of problems to arrive in countries with mature economies. If we do not have solutions for protracted situations, then we will again see that refugees — especially young people in camps — will be vulnerable to the extent that they can be attracted by those who practise violence, including warlords and the like. In my opinion, there is therefore a connection between investing in security and the work of the Economic and Social Council. So I do hope that, perhaps during this year's humanitarian segment, there will be room and opportunity to debate and analyse this further. I must of course say to the representative of France that I am not in charge. I am just asking and pointing out that it might be important. But I hope that, with the assistance of the members there, it will be possible.

Another question pertained to security in the camps and the separation of armed elements and refugees. This is indeed a very important area. Allow me to say that we are making progress compared to a number of years ago. Practices have been developed to separate armed elements from refugees more thoroughly and fundamentally. We can see this in practice. If I were to take the members of the Council to the border between Angola and Zambia, they would be able to see people coming in and to observe how we work together with the officials of Zambia to separate the people. I mean literally separate, as armed persons are brought a long way to other camps where there are other armed elements and where they are totally separated from other refugees. Were I to take members of the Council to camps for Burundian refugees in Tanzania, they would see that there is quite an effort under way by the military and the internal police in those camps to curb the existence of arms in the camps and try to keep them out. This is of course our ideal: to have arms-free refugee camps. So there is progress. This involves the famous "ladder of options" that we use to try to improve the situation in the camps through separation.

Vulnerability in the camps is not limited solely to armed elements. When we speak about vulnerable women in refugee camps we are talking about other types of problems, as the Council may imagine. I just wanted to flag this for the Council as well. It is a very important element.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to respond to questions raised by members of the Council regarding the security of humanitarian staff themselves. This is a very important part of my responsibility and that of my colleagues. Almost every month, I either write letters to colleagues or receive letters from them due to there being a new victim. The numbers are

rising. This is a tragic situation that we are trying to improve by training staff to be aware of risks and by giving them necessary communication equipment, which helps a lot in improving the level of security. As the Council is aware, we also work with the United Nations Security Coordinator system.

But what is painful is that all these investments we must make represent financial resources, money that we ourselves must pay. I sometimes have to say to the poor refugees in camps that I am sorry there is so little for them, but that we have to pay for security. I sincerely doubt that the United Nations as a whole can afford not to pay for this out of the regular budget. I want to repeat that here once again. It is known that it can, but it is not done. It is a very strange situation, that the international community and the United Nations allow the existence of a situation in which the security of humanitarian staff is not considered part of their core responsibilities.

The representative of Guinea had kind words for me, and he was right in asking me how I am now carrying out the process of repatriation — in particular with regard to refugees in Guinea returning to Sierra Leone. We are going to try to do this in a way similar to what was done in Afghanistan. Now that the security situation is improving, we are moving towards a repatriation plan. I have spoken with my people. I have come under a certain amount of pressure to increase the number of returnees, also as a political signal. We are trying to do this. We know how important it is for the political process itself. But in this case as well, I am convinced that there must be sustainable returns of refugees. We must therefore assist refugees to reintegrate into their villages so that they can start once again to earn their own living. As the Council knows, most of them will do so in agriculture. We will do this, and maybe not too long from now we will come back to the Council with a more comprehensive plan to clarify what we are doing in Sierra Leone.

A number of other remarks were made, but I shall try to be selective in responding to them. One question I must certainly answer is that of the representative of the United Kingdom, about the security, or lack of security, in Afghanistan. I have no precise figures, but my people tell me that at the beginning it was very rewarding to see the intensity with which people spontaneously wanted to go home. They took a risk; they were heading, as it were, to a new Afghanistan with acceptable conditions. At this very moment, we see two clouds in the sky. One is that there have been a number of incidents where, even in the "new Afghanistan", people, especially Pashtuns, are now fleeing from certain regions where there is obviously a lack of tolerance and respect – a lack, if you like, of security. The second cloud, we fear, is that enthusiasm will wane if there is not sufficient security in the countryside. I am not in a position to make an estimate of what that means in numbers, but the signals should encourage us to look seriously at addressing this security problem. That, of course, is not my first responsibility, but I have to mention the point. I am fully aware of the dilemmas here: to what extent this has to be done by the international force, and to what extent the process towards an Afghan army and an Afghan security force can be speeded up. The only thing I can say is that, one way or another, there is a real need. Otherwise, the process will not develop in a good way.

I think it is fair that I should stop here, having answered a number of questions and not speaking too long.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lubbers for his most informative responses.

This is a valuable and useful meeting for the Council, which is why we all wish to participate. But I hope we can all be mindful of the hour, so that we can adjourn the meeting by 1 p.m.

**Mr. Gatilov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation is grateful to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, for his detailed briefing and for his replies to questions posed by members of the Council.

There is no need for me to speak of the importance of the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the context of peacefully giving a new life to victims of war and conflict in many countries and regions. That is perfectly obvious. Today, the world community's attention is focused on hot spots where the most urgent tasks include the large-scale return of refugees and the provision of international assistance to internally displaced persons. Mr. Lubbers has detailed the steps being taken by UNHCR to address these problems from the Balkans to East Timor.

Let me first focus on the situation in Africa, where these problems are at their most serious. They

intensify the strong ethnic component of conflicts in Africa, first and foremost in the Great Lakes region. The mere presence on the territory of a neighbouring State of a large number of refugees of a given ethnic group — such as the case of Rwandan Hutus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — very often exacerbates regional tensions. Nor can we ignore the activities of armed groups whose members migrate along with the refugees; this makes it all the more difficult to protect the latter people.

Even though in its consideration of virtually all conflicts the Security Council unfailingly pays due attention to refugee problems and to support for the efforts of UNHCR and other international humanitarian organizations, the situation remains extremely tense. Millions continue to be cut off from their homelands, deprived of the basic necessities of survival. Russia sternly condemns the targeted forced migration of people in the course of a conflict, as was practised, for example, by UNITA in Angola. This cuts people off from the means of production — primarily from the land — and exacerbates the already difficult social and economic problems faced by the countries in question.

We are gravely concerned at the recent increased frequency of attacks and the use of force against international humanitarian personnel. Such crimes cannot be justified, and those guilty of them must be properly punished. Ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel requires more than just the presence of the military contingents that the Security Council sends to protect them; it also requires strict adherence to the principle of impartiality in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance must not be used as an instrument to put political pressure on any party to a conflict. Otherwise, instead of being an effective tool for stabilizing a situation and supporting a process of political settlement, it could risk becoming a factor that foments conflict. That is what once took place in Somalia and in Rwanda.

Today, urgent humanitarian action is needed to solve the problem of refugees in and around Afghanistan; Mr. Lubbers spoke of this in detail, as did a number of members who have spoken before me. Unfortunately, the situation there remains extremely difficult. Tens of thousands of Afghans are going hungry; several areas of the country are nearing extinction, and diseases are raging.

Russia was among the first countries to lend a helping hand to the Afghan people. During the past two months, my country has delivered some 10,000 tonnes of humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan. A field hospital is in operation and is being presented to the Afghans free of charge. The Salang tunnel has been reopened to traffic. In Moscow, Russian organizations and other offices are now completing work on matters relating to the next phase of Russian assistance to Afghanistan, which will be more considerable and more varied. We call upon the parties from which the refugees originate and upon the countries that shelter them to create conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation. At the same time, in a number of cases, local integration or settlement in third countries would be among the options for the settlement of refugees who, because of prevailing conditions, are unable to return home.

We believe that the chief function of the Security Council is to create a political framework within which to prevent, defuse and, ultimately, resolve refugee problems. In practical terms, we need the cooperation of UNHCR, whose activities must be completely apolitical, humanitarian and social in nature.

In conclusion, I would like to focus on one important problem that has been raised during our discussion. Combating the threat of terrorism requires a comprehensive, multifaceted and long-term strategy on the part of the community of nations. Resolution 1373 (2001) calls upon States, before granting refugee status, to adopt appropriate measures with a view to determining whether individuals seeking asylum have planned, assisted in or committed terrorist acts. Clearly, the denial of asylum and protection to terrorists must be universal and applied without double standards. From that perspective, we believe that we should take a fresh look at the situation in refugee camps with a view to preventing their being converted into breeding grounds or a "natural resource" for terrorism.

**Mr. Chen Xu** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. Like other delegations, we would like to thank Mr. Lubbers for his detailed briefing, in particular his overview of the situation in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Balkans, which will be very helpful for the Council in its discussions. His comments on the relationship between the issue of

refugees and the fight against terrorism deserve our attention.

The problem of refugees touches upon many issues and must be resolved through an integrated approach. The issues of which the Security Council is currently seized demonstrate that conflict and war are the major cause of refugees and internally displaced persons. While providing humanitarian assistance to refugees, therefore, the international community should concentrate on the resolution of disputes and the settlement of conflicts. The work that has been carried out by the United Nations in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and East Timor has produced results in this regard. We therefore believe that the Security Council should make further efforts in that direction.

The proper settlement of the question of refugees will require joint efforts on the part of the United Nations, relevant regional organizations and the parties to the conflict. The various bodies within the United Nations system should also be more efficient in their division of labour and cooperate better so that relief work for refugees can be carried out in a coordinated and orderly manner.

The problems associated with refugees vary from one part of the world to another. In resolving these problems, therefore, we must take into account the specific situations and needs of the countries and regions concerned. For some developing countries, poverty and economic underdevelopment are often among the major sources of armed conflict, while the lack of infrastructure, in turn, seriously hinders relief work for refugees. That has been the case in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone. We therefore support Mr. Lubbers' comments to the effect that Africa should remain our top priority. We should build upon the work that has been done to date so as to truly help those countries to overcome their economic difficulties and properly address the return, resettlement and reintegration of refugees. If our work in this regard can yield speedy results, it will have an important impact on the peace and security of the countries and regions concerned.

Previous speakers have asked many of the questions that I was planning to ask, so I will not ask any of my own. I simply wanted to make those brief comments. Before concluding, however, I would like to say how much we appreciate the important contributions made by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over the years to the resolution of the problems of refugees throughout the world. The Chinese delegation will continue to support UNHCR in its work. We are convinced that, under the leadership of Mr. Lubbers, UNHCR will go on to even greater achievements.

**Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to welcome the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, and to express its pleasure at seeing him here today. We are profoundly grateful for his comprehensive briefing and for his contribution to the cause of refugees — seeking solutions to the problems that they face and sensitizing the international community to their tragic situation and prompting it to make further efforts to address the increasing problems faced by refugees throughout the world.

Syria recognizes the fact that, over the past few years, an enormous burden has been placed on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a result of the mounting needs of refugees and internally displaced persons who have found themselves caught in the crossfire of conflict. We appreciate the efforts made by the High Commissioner to meet the needs of such refugees and internally displaced persons.

The question of refugees is prominent in areas of conflict all over the world. The resolution of the refugee problem is an important component of dispute-settlement processes. Furthermore, the influx of refugees and the arming of refugees are factors that contribute to instability in conflict regions. The return and repatriation of refugees are key factors for restoring durable peace and stability during the post-conflict stage.

We must not forget the root causes of conflict in many parts of the world. Many conflicts have their roots in the prevailing economic and social conditions, as well as in the consequences of colonialism or foreign occupation, as is the case in the Middle East region and in many countries, especially developing countries.

Although the problem of refugees in the Middle East does not fall within the jurisdiction of the UNHCR, it does fall within the mandate of the United Nations and the United Nations system as a whole. Therefore, we must bear in mind the fact that millions

of Palestinian refugees remain displaced, outside their homeland, after being expelled from their homeland by armed force in 1948. This has been a chronic humanitarian problem for the last 54 years.

More recently, displaced persons have been made refugees by Israel since 1967. These persons include half a million Syrian citizens. Contrary to logic and all legislation and relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, these refugees continue to live without hope. In fact, they continue to face allegations and perverted logic that are not in accordance with international standards for dealing with the issue of refugees. For instance, Israel totally rejects the return of these refugees to the towns and villages of their homeland, under the pretext that they are not covered by the measures adopted by the Council and the United Nations in general to facilitate the return of all refugees to their homelands.

Some 1 million Palestinian refugees live in Jordan; approximately half a million are in Syria, and about the same number reside in Lebanon. Israel insists that these refugees have no right to return to their homeland, while it allows many others to return to States that are not their countries of origin and to places that are not their legitimate homes. What is important here is that these Palestinian refugees refuse to become residents or naturalized citizens of the countries where they live; their only hope and fervent desire is to return to the villages and towns of their homeland.

Syria agrees completely with all the points made by the High Commissioner and the remarks made by many other speakers here today. We are also deeply concerned over the refugee situation in Africa and believe that the African refugees, who continue to suffer the bitterness of displacement and poverty, must remain a top priority. In addition, we support the High Commissioner's remarks concerning the need to invest in areas to which refugees return.

While we express our thanks to the donor countries and our appreciation for their great efforts to ensure the return of refugees to their homelands, we note that the developing countries continue to bear the brunt of refugees on a global scale. We also call for the international protection of refugees so that their voluntary repatriation will be secured, while recognizing that voluntary repatriation under conditions of safety and dignity remains the best solution for refugees.

**Mr. Strømmen** (Norway): I would also like to thank the High Commissioner for his informative statement and for the timely and highly relevant issues that he raised this morning.

It remains a fact that the victims of forced displacement, be they refugees or internally displaced persons, are an inherent symptom of conflicts and war as well as a source of new conflicts and antagonisms. It goes without saying, therefore, that the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must be closely interlinked with all international efforts to prevent, mitigate and end wars and armed conflicts and arrive at durable solutions. How well these efforts succeed will determine the need and extent of UNHCR's involvement.

The international community has an obligation to safeguard the human rights of the victims of forced displacement. Norway has been among the active proponents of the need to pay special attention to the most vulnerable among the victims — children and women. We have come to realize that general measures often fall short, all the more so because the norms are so frequently determined from a male perspective. We commend UNHCR on the progress it has made towards gender mainstreaming.

All the national and regional situations that the High Commissioner mentioned in his statement this morning warrant a more thorough discussion than is possible on this occasion, in particular given our time constraints. I will therefore limit my remarks to two of the situations he mentioned.

For a number of years, Afghanistan has produced the highest number of refugees in the world. Even though the prospects for repatriation are better than they have been for years, we see how decisive the security situation will be for successful repatriation. In fact, as Chair of the Afghan Support Group, Norway is keenly aware that all humanitarian and reconstruction efforts of the international community will fall short if the security situation is allowed to deteriorate. We must underpin the political process and the authority of the Interim Administration in Kabul and do our utmost to provide a stable security environment for the enormous rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks ahead.

The return of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons is a huge task for UNHCR. If we are to succeed, we must begin to regard refugees and internally displaced persons not only as victims but also as a resource and give them their legitimate voice in the running of their own lives. Empowerment of women is a special challenge. We place much trust in UNHCR's ability to do its part of the job and coordinate its efforts with those of all other relevant international actors.

A word on West Africa: with regard to Liberia, we are glad that the security situation appears to have improved in the areas where displaced Liberians and refugees from Sierra Leone last week fled the intensified fighting between rebels and Government forces. The fact that many of these Liberians have been displaced several times and that some were repatriated to Liberia only a few years ago, after having been forced to live abroad as refugees, illustrates fully the tragic human aspects of these issues. It also illustrates the importance of ensuring security for refugees after they have been helped to return home. I hope that UNHCR can now go ahead with the planned voluntary repatriation of refugees to Sierra Leone and that appropriate steps will be taken to prepare for their homecoming.

Finally, we welcome the High Commissioner's update on the situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia, which is particularly valuable in view of the forthcoming Security Council mission to these countries. We will keep his remarks in mind.

**Mr. Corr** (Ireland): On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to thank High Commissioner Lubbers for his very comprehensive and detailed presentation this morning, and also to commend you, Sir, for the leadership and determination you have shown since assuming the presidency.

Since many of the points I would have raised have already been answered, I should like to ask just two or three general questions, if I may.

One, which Mr. Lubbers addressed at the beginning and conclusion of his remarks as well as in his first response, is related to his use of the word "paradigm" in terms of a new approach by the international community to refugees. In terms of the Global Consultations process, the meeting of ministers in Geneva in December and many issues that he has been emphasizing over recent months, he has referred to the need for the international community, building on the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, to look at new challenges of modernization, as I think he put it, on issues such as the protection of refugees within broader migration movements; burden-sharing, of course, which has become critical because many Governments, as he said, are reluctant to take so many refugees; and the integration of economic migrants, which can be a very difficult issue.

Does Mr. Lubbers see, in general terms, an operational set of conclusions emerging out of the process that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is now engaged in? This is, in many ways, an abstract question, but the conclusion to those issues, of course, will become deeply operational, depending on how the international community and the Council look at these issues in the future.

A second question I also wanted to ask concerns refugees not being allowed to languish in camps, often for decades. The High Commissioner made the point on the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan, where, I think, a figure of 36,000 was mentioned. He rightly stressed that many of those people have been in camps since the 1960s and the 1970s. Is there a particular new approach that can be taken? The same, obviously, would become true of Afghanistan, potentially; millions of people, even before 11 September, have been in camps in Iran and Pakistan. What approach, including in the context of the discussions with the African Union on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, could be taken to address the question of long-term refugees, since often — particularly in many African countries — that has been a problem that the international community has tended to ignore and that often, in turn, becomes a very destabilizing factor, sometimes years or decades afterwards, in terms of conflict prevention?

The last question I did want to ask, picking up on the remarks of the High Commissioner, refers to the Great Lakes region. We had the opportunity to hear President Buyoya earlier this week. In terms of the numbers of internally displaced persons or refugees who, once there is a ceasefire, may potentially be returning in much larger numbers to Burundi, there has been some speculation that there have been discussions on safe havens as an interim measure or, given the numbers involved, that a more structured approach will be adopted. I noticed, of course, that Mr. Lubbers used

the word "voluntary" in his statement. Does he see the particular challenge in the Great Lakes region and in Burundi as one of the more complex over the coming period? Since, hopefully, there will be a ceasefire before too long, how rapid a movement of returnees does he envisage, given the 600,000, I think, in Tanzania alone?

These are very general questions, but, to conclude, I would also like to express appreciation for the detail with which he has gone into these issues. We appreciate very much the work he is doing.

**Ms. Lee** (Singapore): We welcome, as others have, the High Commissioner back to the Council and thank him for his very comprehensive briefing. His presentation is a timely reminder of the links between the issue of refugees and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The targeting of refugees and internally displaced persons has also long been used as a military objective and political tool. In fact, as mass human displacements are inherently destabilizing, such exoduses can, as Mr. Lubbers has said, create tensions between States and undermine international peace and security.

We also thank the High Commissioner for reminding us that Africa must remain a top priority. Of course, as the Chair of the Liberian sanctions Committee, we have taken careful note of his comments on the situation in the Mano River Union. We have also taken note of his comments on the situation in East Timor. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cannot, of course, remain in East Timor indefinitely, we trust that its exit plans pay careful attention to and take into account the current situation on the ground.

When addressing refugee flows, there is increasingly a need to take into account the regional context. The cross-border nature of many existing conflicts means that human displacements — and, indeed, the push factors — are not limited by national boundaries. It is with this in mind that we welcome the encouraging steps taken towards a more comprehensive and holistic approach in addressing conflicts and the resultant human displacements, for instance, in West Africa and the Great Lakes region.

On its part, the Security Council has a special, although not exclusive, responsibility in tackling the root causes of conflict and also in helping to create the conditions to support the return of displaced persons. Here, it may be pertinent to recall the words of former High Commissioner Mrs. Sadako Ogata to the Council more than two years ago. She observed that:

> "humanitarian action alone will not be able to solve any of the problems leading to forced human displacement; it cannot substitute for Governments and the Security Council in areas for which they have a clear responsibility, such as peacekeeping and peace-building. The Council has an essential role to play in preventing, containing and resolving conflicts — and, hence, refugee problems." (*S/PV.4089*, p. 6)

Mrs. Ogata then went on to enumerate the ways in which the Council could achieve this, which I will not repeat, but, as the High Commissioner's own presentation makes clear, these common-sense points enumerated by Mrs. Ogata are still relevant today and we should bear them in mind as we go about our work in the Council.

We also wish to emphasize once again the critical importance of assistance to host countries, many of which are in the developing world and facing their own economic challenges. Hosting large refugee populations poses unique pressures and creates an enormous strain on host countries. This was recognized by our leaders in part VI of the Millennium Declaration, under the heading "Protecting the vulnerable", which pledged

> "to strengthen international cooperation, including burden sharing in, and the coordination of humanitarian assistance to, countries hosting refugees". (*resolution 55/2*, para. 26)

Unfortunately, we have yet to identify in concrete terms how best to collectively tackle the problem in a long-term and durable manner.

Managing the dilemma of the global refugee crisis requires a concerted international effort that lies beyond the scope of today's debate, but we must, at the very least, consider how the other parts of the United Nations system, including the Security Council, can better assist and complement the work of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies in providing refugee relief. We welcome Mr. Lubbers' view on this.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Lubbers and his team for their excellent

and tireless work, often under the most trying circumstances. We feel that it is unacceptable that there should be deliberate targeting by armed elements of humanitarian and relief personnel. There is a need for a robust international framework for the better protection of United Nations humanitarian personnel, building on the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. If the High Commissioner has any thoughts on this, we hope that he will share them with us, if not today, then whenever possible.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Lubbers, to respond to the questions that have been asked.

**Mr. Lubbers**: Let me express my thanks for the very rich contributions in terms of comments and questions.

Allow me to begin by responding to the first remark of the representative of China. He said, quite correctly, that we have been successful in a number of situations, which he mentioned. This is an invitation to the Security Council to broaden its efforts to include other regions where sufficient success has not yet been achieved, and I would underline this. This also relates to a remark made by the representative of Singapore in which she quoted a statement made two years ago by Mrs. Ogata, who elaborated on the key responsibility of the Security Council to build and to keep peace as essential to reducing the number of new refugees. In fact, working for peace creates part of the solution: people can then go home.

I strongly agree also with the statement made by several representatives that assistance to host countries is a very important element. It has become very clear in the context of global consultations that, while the international community fully accepts, and wants to continue with, the commitment not to push out but to find solutions for refugees, this principled attitude can be put into practice only when there is fair burden-sharing. But fair burden-sharing is achieved through different corridors. One of them is, indeed, support for the host countries, and I will repeat what I said in the first response: assistance must be given not only to refugees in the host countries, but also to the areas in which large refugee populations are located. We have to relate better to the host communities there.

I want to stress once again in particular — and I think that this point was made also by the representative of Ireland — the link with the African partnership initiative, and, more generally, I would say, with development assistance. It is absolutely wrong thinking to see refugees and internally displaced persons in terms of humanitarian assistance only. It is very important, if one wants to find solutions, to see them first as people — men, women, families — who want once again to play a role in society, to become productive again, to participate in society. Therefore we badly need the resources and the partnerships necessary to go one step further than humanitarian assistance only. Indeed, I think that a new paradigm should be developed in the search for solutions.

There is something strange here. If one studies the history of the High Commissioner for Refugees, one can see that it all started in 1951 with the ambition to take care of people who do not have governments to take care of them. Shortly thereafter, the international community — the United Nations — came to the conclusion that an essential element of that mission should be the achievement of durable solutions. But that element of the mission was never really made operational — except occasionally — and it is still quite weak.

I think that the time has come to take this step forward. That is indeed the way to end protected situations. In this context, the Council sometimes plays a key role in bringing about security and in creating conditions that allow people to go home; that is true. But often it starts earlier; in fact, from the very beginning one has to think in terms of solutions — fostering self-reliance and empowerment and providing education. This is necessary in any case, be it for repatriation, local integration or even for a resettlement solution.

I was asked to say a few words, but I have to be brief because we have a time limit. Some things have become clear from these global consultations. I will mention two examples, still not concluded. It has become clear to us that, in new situations, we have to think more systematically about comprehensive plans to deal with massive outflows of people. This is not totally new. It was done with the Kosovars, it was done with the Vietnamese boat people, and there are other examples.

Maybe we have to conclude that, in any situation where within a year, let us say, a substantial number of people flow out of a country, we should bring countries

together at an international conference and call upon them to devise a comprehensive plan to share the burden. In this way maybe they can share that burden temporarily and not say, "There is a problem there and we are staying out", but see it as the international community's problem. This is one important element.

Let me turn to the second element. We have an agenda for development, in particular with Africa; we can use instruments and financial resources to end a number of protected situations and to create possibilities for repatriation. I agree with the representative of the Russian Federation that UNHCR should be an apolitical organization; we are a humanitarian body. But it is, in fact, very humanitarian to say to the African leaders and to the rich countries that, if they embark on new initiatives and partnerships, they should reserve resources and create conditions conducive to resolving a number of these problems. I am saying this in the interest of the people on whose behalf I speak, who deserve it.

To be frank, I say this also in relation to the international community and to the Security Council itself, because, as several representatives have noted, not to provide solutions to refugees is, in fact, to take risks with the future. The problems come back time and again, and therefore we have to go beyond thinking, "Fine, we have a yearly report from the High Commissioner, and so it is business as usual". This is absolutely unacceptable.

The 20 million people with whom I am concerned represent only a limited number in terms of the population of this earth, but, believe me, the challenge is much greater. They are the outcome of tragic deficiencies in our political systems, and they could be the cause of new problems. If we complain about the increase in human trafficking and about increasing crime, then it is good to be aware that those phenomena have root causes, and that one of them is the fact that we simply do not deliver in terms of solidarity and new opportunities for those people who are victims of a first round of violence and persecution.

I think it would be better for me to come to a close. There is so much more to say, but I have been asked to be brief. I shall use my very last minute to introduce my new representative here. He was a special envoy of the previous High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, and then for me in the Balkans. I have now asked him to come to New York because I am aware that there are ongoing developments and situations, as well as many questions that deserve more detailed answers. My man here, Eric Morris, who is known to the Council, is available to all members of the Council.

Finally, I want to thank the President for giving me the opportunity to be here, in the midst of the Council, to make it clear that the Security Council is absolutely essential to my work. If there is improvement, it is thanks to the Security Council and its initiatives. If there are protracted situations, I think the Council deserves to have the other parts of the United Nations family and system, all the countries and the Economic of Social Council — to which I referred in my answer to the representative of France — focused on ending those situations. Only when we prioritize durable solutions for refugees will there be peace and security. Without that, one can forget other things. One can have nice development and assistance plans, as well as speeches, but they are not going to work. We must see this in a very practical way.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lubbers for his comments and for the responses he has given to the questions asked of him.

**Mr. Mbayu** (Cameroon): I would like, through you, Mr. President, to thank Mr. Lubbers for his lucid and illuminating presentation. I thank him in particular, as previous speakers have, for the fact that, despite what some delegations mentioned about the "CNN effect", he still managed to maintain the focus on Africa. It is true that, as an African, I would have been pleased and happy to do without this dubious distinction, but we have to deal with the fact that the focus is on Africa.

In that connection, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Lubbers for his mention of the importance of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is an African-conceived and African-led initiative that, as all members of the Council know, is aimed at working for peace, political stability, economic prosperity and sustainable development in Africa — which, in fact, is one of the main and surest ways of stemming the tide of the refugee problem. I thank him very much for that, and we take note of his call on African leaders to try to factor in the refugee component in the implementation of NEPAD. That message is well understood, particularly in terms of my country, which happens to

be one of the 14 countries called upon to steer the implementation of the initiative.

While waiting for NEPAD to have its effect in the long term, something has to be done in the interim. It is in this vein that we would like to sympathize with, and share in, his call for more resources for the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). That call is very important because, as Mr. Lubbers mentioned, when he took office he found out that there was a major financial gap. As is said in Latin, *nemo dat quod non habet* — you cannot give what you do not have.

We understand the difficulties because, in the process of his reform to accommodate to the limited resources, some offices have had to be closed or redeployed. One of those happened to be the one in Cameroon. In this connection, I would like to ask him — and I know this was done just a short time ago — whether he has had the time to evaluate what the effects of that closure and redeployment are. That is the first issue.

The second issue concerns his determination to work against the abuse of the asylum system. I think this is a very important element because, as he mentioned, we are dealing here with a very vulnerable group that, more often than not, are considered as being scapegoated. We heard of wire reports of some cases in the southern parts of Africa in which the system had been abused by some UNHCR workers to serve as a conduit for immigration to some northern countries. First of all, I would like Mr. Lubbers to confirm whether this is true at all; and, if so, to say what actions are being taken by his Office to address the situation, which, in a way, detracts from the very important work being done by the devoted workers of UNHCR.

Thirdly, my last question has to do with Afghanistan. Yesterday we heard the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan mention the fact that the United Nations is now working towards an integrated approach to United Nations intervention in Afghanistan. Experience in other areas has shown that, more often than not, the full impact of international intervention in crisis situations is diminished by lack of coordination and, sometimes, by turf wars. I would just like, if time permits, for Mr. Lubbers to shed light on how UNHCR intends to fit into that effort, and if he foresees any problems in which the Council can help with some guidance.

**Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): Given the lateness of the hour, I shall try to be as brief as possible.

First of all, my delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate on the problem of refugees, which is an important issue. The briefing just delivered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is extremely interesting and useful to us.

I would simply like to speak a bit about the situation in the western Balkans, to which Mr. Lubbers quite rightly referred. We share his analysis. I would just like to draw the attention of the Council and that of Mr. Lubbers to the highly delicate situation that still prevails in Macedonia. We agree with him that there is a major risk of new problems triggering refugee flows. We must not forget that this small country recently experienced an unprecedented inflow of refugees, a number that represents a very significant percentage of its own population. To some extent, the presence of those refugees during the Kosovo crisis has jeopardized the very existence of Macedonia. We must never forget that. I therefore thank Mr. Lubbers for having addressed this very important problem that may potentially become serious.

Mr. Lubbers was quite right to speak of a certain donor fatigue with respect to the problem of refugees in the western Balkans. True enough, there has been some impressive success, but at the same time the reintegration of refugees into their respective national communities remains a major problem. That is where we run into the very important issue that Mr. Lubbers mentioned a moment ago: immediate humanitarian efforts, and development efforts. We thank Mr. Lubbers for taking that nuanced and accurate approach, and for showing that refugees often constitute a development opportunity both for the country of refuge and for the country of origin. That is worth emphasizing.

**Mr. Gokool** (Mauritius): In view of time constraints, and in response to the appeal of the President, I shall limit my intervention to just a few observations. First of all, let me thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's public meeting on the subject of refugees, which is of direct relevance to the work of the Security Council. Members of the Council will agree that hardly any report of the

Secretary-General discussed in the Security Council fails to address the issue of refugees.

I wish also to join other delegations in extending a warm welcome to Mr. Ruud Lubbers, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and in thanking him for his comprehensive briefing. We commend the High Commissioner for his sustained efforts in addressing refugee problems. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the invaluable work of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which helps more than 21 million refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide.

Let me begin my observations by saying that it is important that refugees and internally displaced persons not be denied basic human rights and human dignity. That can be possible only if humanitarian agencies and local non-governmental organizations work together with a view to preventing abuses, especially to children, women and vulnerable groups, in the countries concerned.

Secondly, advancing human security, especially for refugees and returnees, should not be the responsibility solely of UNHCR or the humanitarian agencies. There should be greater awareness among world leaders about addressing the conditions of refugees. In that regard, I think it is pertinent to reiterate that there is a need for practical burden-sharing, as the High Commissioner rightly pointed out in his statement this morning. We were happy to learn that at their December ministerial meeting, the States parties to the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees adopted a declaration. We hope that the declaration will be put into effect and will result in better protection for refugees and returnees.

My delegation believes that there should be a comprehensive international and regional approach that would ensure a seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to a development strategy. It is well known that the absence of integrated peace-building strategies, particularly in refugee situations, often diminishes the chances for achieving a sustainable peace. It is therefore time to bridge the gap that exists between the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance during conflicts and the beginning of long-term development programmes in post-conflict situations.

Finally, my delegation would like to ask the High Commissioner for Refugees a question in respect of Afghanistan. Bearing in mind that major refugee problems exist in Afghanistan, what kind of coordination with other United Nations agencies is being envisaged to ensure not only a safe return but a safe stay for the refugees? It is undeniable that safety and security should be provided on all fronts, or else all efforts to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable groups may come to naught.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a few comments and pose a few questions in my capacity as the representative of Mexico.

I thank Mr. Lubbers for his substantial presentation and for participating in today's meeting, which was invaluable for the Security Council. I thank him too for having mentioned Mexico's experience with Guatemalan and other Central American refugees. He was right to note that there may be something in that experience that could be applied in the search for solutions to refugee problems in other regions. Here, I would focus on two elements: the successful use of voluntary repatriation, principally for Guatemalan refugees returning home from Mexico; and, as noted by Mr. Lubbers, the willingness of the Mexican Government to naturalize and normalize the status of certain refugees who were born in our country. That is being extended also to some members of the families of refugees born in Mexico.

Let me also underline something else that has already been mentioned: that, by establishing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations shouldered an eminently humanitarian responsibility that is part of the complex political picture that gives rise to the refugee problem. That is why it is of the utmost importance to my country that the humanitarian nature of the work of UNHCR be preserved, notwithstanding the demands of the fight against terrorism. It is our hope that the fight against terrorism will not aversely affect the ability of the United Nations to keep providing support, assistance and protection to refugees.

Mr. Lubbers has rightly said that the United Nations and UNHCR play a coordinating role and must work with a broad range of other international, multilateral and national bodies. He spoke also of the interface that is necessary to ensure that not only the UNHCR but all those other institutions as well are involved at every phase of the process. That process ranges from immediate humanitarian assistance to

refugees when a problem first arises to protecting them, providing security and seeing to their return and their rehabilitation. We are certain that Mr. Lubbers would agree that it is necessary also to prevent situations that could lead to refugee problems. It is our view that this is a central international security issue, and that it therefore requires a strategic partnership among all relevant institutions. As Mr. Lubbers has said, we must seek lasting solutions because only these can provide a foundation for peace.

We also believe that the central problems of development must be tackled, since these are at the root of many of the factors that in turn give rise to displacement, migration and refugee problems; we consider that this is the spirit guiding the preparations for the Monterrey, Mexico, International Conference on Financing for Development and that will guide its deliberations.

I should therefore like to put the following question to Mr. Lubbers: in the light of his experience at UNHCR, what does he consider the prospects to be for this strategic association, this partnership, involving not only the Security Council but all the agencies of the United Nations system? On that basis, could we also create a leadership phenomenon at the institutional level, which will bring in the support of other countries?

We are certain that the central problem with which Mr. Lubbers will have to come to grips over the coming months and years will be how to make resources available to deal with that gigantic phenomenon that currently involves more than 21 million people. How can we channel those resources across the board, not just to provide immediate assistance to refugees but to deal with the phenomenon in its entirety? I put that question to Mr. Lubbers on the understanding that time may not allow him to respond fully here and now. However, it would prove very useful — for Mexico and for the entire Council — if he were able to submit a note to us reflecting his thoughts on the partnership and the strategic association that needs to be created to come to grips with the problem of refugees, across the board, in a lasting and stable way, as part and parcel of efforts to maintain international peace and security.

I conclude by once again thanking Mr. Lubbers for having joined us at this Security Council meeting and expressing the hope that he will soon do so again.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I should now like to call on Mr. Lubbers to respond to the comments made and questions posed.

**Mr. Lubbers:** In the last round of statements, the representative of Cameroon brought up three points, the first relating to what I would call the rather tragic decision that we had to take in relation to the office in Cameroon. I promised his compatriots that we would take a fresh look at that, because it was based very much on an absolute shortage of funds. I have promised to look into the situation.

Secondly, I confirm, indeed — we spoke earlier about this — that very serious, even criminal, acts took place in Nairobi related to resettlement. We went to the judiciary and the overseers, as well as the competent authorities in Kenya. Beyond that, of course, we have our own responsibilities to take the measures needed and to improve the system.

The third question asked by the representative of Cameroon related to Afghanistan. His point was also put forward by others — for example by the representative of Mauritius. I will try to be brief in explaining what developed. As soon as the situation in Afghanistan changed to the extent that one could begin managed remigration, we made ourselves available to do that job, because our mandate is not only to provide protection and assistance to refugees, but to find solutions for them. That is the first point.

Before we started to do that, we had been asked by the United Nations system — via the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — to take care of internally displaced persons in the eastern part of Afghanistan. This was a relatively new flow of internally displaced persons resulting from the air attacks on cities in the eastern part of Afghanistan. People had to flee, but the borders were closed, so they went to the countryside and hills, and we were asked to go there. We were able to do so because, since we were preparing ourselves for a larger outflow, we had available the logistics and the material requirements. So that was the first phase.

The next step related to what to do with the internally displaced persons who wanted to go home. We came to the conclusion that in terms of repatriation, it had to be a seamless operation. In the villages to which the people were going — which we had to

prepare for people to return — we could not make a distinction based on whether someone was a refugee from outside the country or an internally displaced person. So we did that together. I came to the point of view, of course, that, in situations of partnership, if the International Organization for Migration (IOM) had a capacity and used it for internally displaced persons in the western part of the country, while the Red Cross was being very positive in assisting internally displaced persons in, for example, the northern part of the country, it would be rather stupid if we did not make use of those capacities. So our plan for repatriation is to work together with them, while continuing to give assistance to refugees remaining in the surrounding countries and to internally displaced persons who have still not returned home.

So it is a partnership operation. Perhaps the simplest way to describe our role is to use the term "lead agency". We cannot do it ourselves, though; we have to do it in partnership. By the way, what I said makes it clear: this is not only partnership within the United Nations system; it is also partnership beyond the United Nations system. I mentioned IOM; I mentioned the Red Cross. I could mention relevant non-governmental organizations as well. But it is, of course, very important for the new Interim Administration in Kabul that there be one address. So we sit there at the table and invite the others, and we share our insights and compare notes and numbers on what has to be done. We profile the people and determine what sort of capacities they have, and discuss what it means to bring people back.

That is the way we approach it. And — in response to one of the other questions — as far as I can see, there are no problems with that. The system still has to be formalized. The Council will hear about that, of course, from the Secretary-General and Lakhdar Brahimi — whose deputy, Mr. Fisher, has been chosen. I have full trust in him. He will look into the cooperation that is also needed with development agencies, so that when we have, as it were, done our job, we can hand it over with trust and confidence. So he is responsible. We speak to him about not only our efforts, undertaken together with others, in the process of assisting returnees but, later on, development and reconstruction efforts, as put on the table first in Tokyo. As the Council knows, the Interim Administration itself said, "It's fine; it's nice. But please, we are now the Interim Administration. Give us time to have a look ourselves". So our people discipline themselves to go to the Minister. I think that that is good. It is still an interim Administration, but we consider it to be in charge of governance for the Afghans today.

So those are a few elements of the inclusive way in which we approach this matter — in partnership with others. It is very clear, too, that there has to be one address with which the Minister for Repatriation can link up. We do this in the United Nations under the leadership of Lakhdar Brahimi, with his deputy for this segment, Mr. Fisher, who is dealing with returnees and reconstruction. That is the additional information on Afghanistan.

The representative of Bulgaria reflected once again on Macedonia. I am a bit jealous: my instructions have always been to speak of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", but he can allow himself to speak about "Macedonia". However, we are speaking of the same people.

We are very aware that the very generous Macedonians received an enormous influx of Albanians from Kosovo when the Albanians were in danger. These refugees have now returned to Kosovo. We now ask our Albanian friends to behave in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and to give the Macedonians who were obliged to flee a number of villages every opportunity to return. This forms part of our confidence-building strategy. At the same time, we find it gratifying that the Government and political parties of Macedonia have agreed to a system in which there are also full rights for Albanians, some of whom are already citizens or will soon obtain citizenship. That is a different story, but it is important that this coexistence be strengthened further, and we at UNHCR are there to do a job of confidence-building. I am positive that this is going to be a success.

The representative of Mauritius pointed out the need for an integrated approach and asked me about Afghanistan. I have already answered the latter question.

I now turn to you, Mr. President, in your capacity as representative of Mexico. You very capably echoed the main points of your colleagues here, and I am prepared to answer you more thoroughly in a note concerning what is needed in order to go forward in our strategy.

I should like to thank you, Sir, in your capacities as representative of Mexico and President of the Council, and all of your colleagues here as well. I am aware that I took too much of the Council's time, but I think the 21 million people who are my concern deserve it.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, for his participation in this meeting. This has been time very well spent. It could have been extended so that we could continue hearing the explanations and perspectives of the High Commissioner concerning the problem of refugees. I also thank him for his gracious words addressed to me and to my country.

No other member of the Security Council has asked for the floor.

Before adjourning the meeting, I wish to announce that it is my understanding that the members of the Council have reached agreement on a presidential statement on the situation in Burundi. Accordingly, immediately following the adjournment of this meeting, I shall convene another meeting of the Council to adopt that statement.

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*